

## 19. OCCURRENCE OF THE INDIAN GREAT BLACK WOODPECKER *DRYOCOPUS JAVENSIS* (HORSFIELD)

The sighting of a solitary Indian great black woodpecker *Dryocopus javensis* (Horsfield) by the late Salim Ali in the Bastar district (82°E) was reported in *JBNHS* 49: 787. This led to the speculation that though till then unrecorded, the bird may extend eastwards along the Satpura trend of mountains as it does southwards from the Surat Dangs in Gujarat along the Western Ghats to Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Since then only one other record has been reported by Ripley and Beehler from the Visakhapatnam Hills (Eastern Ghats) in selectively logged forest at Jyothimamidi (*JBNHS* 84: 558).

During a visit to the Udanti Sanctuary (about 20°15' N, 82°15' E,) in the south-eastern part of Raipur district, I sighted about 30 of these woodpeckers in different localities on 10 and 11 May 1987. It had rained the previous two nights

and hence humidity was quite high.

On a second visit to the Sanctuary from 25 to 28 May 1989, only two birds were encountered. It was very hot (c. 44°C) during the period, and light showers were recorded on 25 May. In the interlude between the two visits neither deforestation nor any significant disturbance to the bird's habitat was observed.

Enquiries revealed that the Indian great black woodpecker was noticed in quite good numbers in the area prior to my visit. Hence sightings are seemingly dictated by climatic conditions obtainable at the time, and are influenced by its local movements.

November 19, 1990

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## 20. OCCURRENCE OF THE PHILIPPINE SHRIKE *LANIUS CRISTATUS LUCIONENSIS* LINN. IN COASTAL ANDHRA PRADESH

In the course of bird ringing at Sriharikota island (13°25' to 13°55' N, 80°03' to 80°19' E), Andhra Pradesh, as part of the ongoing research project of the BNHS, we caught a brown shrike *Lanius cristatus* on 14 April 1990 in one of our mistnets, located in the scrub jungle just behind the SHAR (Space Research Centre) Guest House. Although the bird superficially resembled the nominate race (a common winter visitor here), close examination revealed that it had a greyish white forehead and a greyish brown crown. One of us (VS) who had seen this bird in Port Blair, Andamans, identified it as the Philippine shrike *L. c. lucionensis* Linn. It had wing and tail measurements slightly higher than those of the nominate race. Unfortunately it was not possible to photograph the bird due to restrictions imposed for security reasons. The bird was ringed with BNHS ring AB-135377, measured and released.

Wing and tail measurements for the bird were 94 and 94 mm respectively, as compared to 80-89

mm (wing) and 78-89 mm (tail) for *L. c. cristatus*.

It was sighted subsequently in the same locality twice on 19 and 20 April 1990.

According to Ali and Ripley (1987) this subspecies is a winter visitor (September-April) chiefly to the Andamans and Nicobar. The only record from the Indian mainland has been from Kerala (Hume 1876). Its wintering habitat has been described as secondary jungle, gardens around habitations and forest clearings for settlements on hills and plains.

Ripley (1982) *vide* Stuart Baker (1902, 1920) suspects *L. c. lucionensis* to breed in North Cachar as it does in the subtropical parts of western Sichuan (Szechuan). There is every likelihood, therefore, that earlier records were confused for the nominate bird.

November 28, 1990

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## 21. OCCURRENCE OF LONGTAILED MINIVET *PERICROCOTUS ETHOLOGUS* BANGS & PHILLIPS IN KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK, BHARATPUR, RAJASTHAN

25 December 1989 at Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, dawned with a particularly heavy mist. On an early morning walk one of us (DN) wandered off the trail into an area of salt-bush *Salvadora persica* and found a few lesser whitethroats *Sylvia curruca* and bluethroats *Erithacus svecicus*. Then a party of 25-30 minivets *Pericrocotus* spp. moved rapidly through the bushes and, luckily, stopped just above DN. Small *P. cinnamomeus* and scarlet *P. flammeus* were quickly identified with a couple of adult males of each species as well as several females or immature males.

One of the party was clearly not of these species, appearing smaller than the scarlet, although still much larger than the small minivets. On closer inspection its bill seemed particularly short; and perhaps the main reason why its body and bill seemed small was that its tail was long, much longer than that of the scarlet minivets.

The bird's forehead and underparts were bright yellow, with the top of its head and back a slaty grey. Wings were black, with a prominent bright yellow inverted U-shape formed apparently by some secondary feathers, the greater and primary coverts and two or more primary remiges. Its rump was bright yellow, as was the whole of the outer rectrices, contrasting markedly with the black tail.

DN managed to watch the flock, and this individual, at close range for 10-15 minutes, using

8 x 40 binoculars. In the misty conditions, it seemed that the flock stayed much closer together, and allowed a closer approach, than usual. Reference to Ali and Ripley (1983) threw doubt on the initial identification as an adult female longtailed minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*, as Plate 71 shows this species to have a bill almost as long as *P. flammeus* and also the tail is not shown in full.

Ewans (1989) and Abdulali and Panday (1978) include the shortbilled minivet *Pericrocotus brevirostris* as an uncommon winter migrant but *P. ethologus* is not recorded. DN was almost prepared to believe that he had been mistaken and had perhaps seen the shortbilled minivet—whose female is also not depicted fully in the HANDBOOK, being obscured by the male—the other author (CS) told him that he had seen and photographed a probable male longtailed minivet at the same locality on 22 December 1988.

On consulting the HANDBOOK we were convinced that both birds, seen in two successive winters, were longtailed minivet *P. ethologus*. The HANDBOOK records them straggling south to Jodhpur and Mount Abu in Rajasthan, so their occurrence at Bharatpur is not surprising. It seems clear that a sustained programme of passerine ringing would probably reveal other examples of this species in Rajasthan.

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November 1, 1990

C. SIVASUBRAMANIAN

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The late K.S. Dharmakumarsinhji recorded *P. ethologus* from Bhavnagar in Gujarat on 23 December 1982 (*JBNHS* 82: 657). A.G. Gaston found it a regular winter visitor in small numbers to the Delhi Ridge, and opined that *P. brevirostris* of the Checklist of the birds of Delhi, Agra and Bharatpur (Abdulali and Panday 1978) referred actually to *P. ethologus* (*JBNHS* 75: 123) —Editors.

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